From metheus!ogcvax!omsvax!icalqa!hplabs!sri-unix!
!KARP@SUMEX-AIM Wed Sep 28 17:18:53 1983
Subject: Amusement from CMU's opinion bboard
From: Peter Karp <KARP@SUMEX-AIM>

[Reprinted from the CMU opinion board via the SU-SCORE bboard.]

T H E G R E A T S C H O O L O F F L A M E S

Ever dreamed of flaming with the Big Boys? ... Had that desire to write an immense diatribe, berating de facto all your peers who hold contrary opinions? ... Felt the urge to have your fingers moving without being connected to your brain? Well, by simply sending in the form on the back of this bboard post, you could begin climbing into your pulpit alongside greats from all walks of life such as Chomsky, Weizenbaum, Reagan, Von Danneken, Ellison, Abzug, Arifat and many many more. You don't even have to leave the comfort of your armchair!

Here's how it works: Each week we send you a new lesson. You read the notes and then simply write one essay each week on the assigned topic. Your essays will be read by our expert pool of professional flamers and graded on Sparsity, Style, Overtness, Incoherence, and a host of other important aspects. You will receive a long letter from your specially selected advisor indicating in great detail why you obviously have the intellectual depth of a soap dish. This apprenticeship is all there is to it.

Here are some examples of the courses offered by The School:

Classical Flames: You will study the flamers who started it all. For example, Descarte's much quoted demonstration that reality isn't. Special attention is paid, in this course, to the old and new testaments and how western flaming was influenced by their structure. (The Bible plays a particularly important role in our program and most courses will spend at least some time tracing biblical origins or associations of their special topic. See, particularly, the special seminar on Space Cadetism, which concentrate on ESP and UFO phenomena.)

Contemporary Flame Technique: Attention is paid to the detail of flame form in this course. The student will practice the subtle and overt ad hominem argument; fact avoidance maneuvers; "at length" writing style; over generalization; and other important factor which make the modern flame inaccessible to the general populace. Readings from Russell ("Now I will admit that some unusually stupid children of ten may find this material a bit difficult to fathom..."), Skinner, (primarily concentrating on his Verbal Learning), Sagan (on abstract overestimation) and many others. This course is most concerned with politicians (sometimes, redundantly, referred to as "political flamers") since their speech writers are particularly adept at the technique that we wish to foster.

Appearing Brilliant (thanks to the Harvard Lampoon): Nobel laureates lecture on topics of world import but which are very much outside their field of expertise. There is a large representation of Nobels in physics: the discoverer of the UnCharmed Pi Mesa Beta Quark explains how the population explosion can be averted through proper reculterization of mothers; and professor Nikervator, first person to

properly develop the theory of faster- than-sound "Whizon" docking coreography, tells us how mind is the sole theological entity.

Special seminar in terminology: The name that you give something is clearly more important than its semantics. Experts in nomenclature demonstrate their skills. Pulitzer Prize winner Douglas Hofstader makes up 15,000 new words whose definitions, when read sideways prove the existence of themselves and constitute fifteen months of columns in Scientific American. A special round table of drug company and computer corporation representatives discuss how to construct catchy names for new products and never give the slightest hint to the public about what they mean.

Writing the Scientific Journal Flame: Our graduates will be able to compete in the modern world of academic and industrial research flaming, where the call is high for trained pontificators. the student reads short sections from several fields and then may select a field of concentration for detailed study.

Here is an example description of a detailed scientific flaming seminar:

Computer Science: This very new field deals directly with the very metal of the flamer's tools: information and communication. The student selecting computer science will study several areas including, but not exclusively:

> Artificial Intelligence: Roger Schank explains the design of his flame understanding and generation engine (RUSHIN) and will explain how the techniques that it employs constitute a complete model of mind, brain, intelligence, and quantum electrodynamics. For contrast, Marvin Minsky does the same. Weizenbaum tells us, with absolutely no data or alternative model, why AI is logically impossible, and moreover, immoral.
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> Programming Languages: A round table is held between Wirth, Hoare, Dykstra, Iverson, Perlis, and Jean Samett, in order to keep them from killing each other.
>
> Machines and systems: Fred Brooks and Gordon Bell lead a field of experts over the visual cliff of hardware considerations.

The list of authoritative lectures goes on and on. In addition, an inspiring introduction by Feigenbaum explains how important it is that flame superiority be maintained by the United States in the face of the recent challenges from Namibia and the Panama Canal zone.

But there's more. Not only will you read famous flamers in abundance, but you will actually have the opportunity to "run with the pack". The Famous Flamer's School has arranged to provide access for all computer science track students, to the famous ARPANet where students will be able to actually participate in discussions of earthshaking current importance, along with the other brilliant young flamers using this nationwide resource. You'll read and write about whether keyboards should have a space bar across the whole bottom or split under the thumbs; whether or not Emacs is God, and which deity is the one true editor; whether the brain actually cools the body or not;

whether the earth revolves around the sun or vice versa -- and much more. You contributions will be whisked across the nation, faster than throwing a 2400 foot magtape across the room, into the minds of thousands of other electrolusers whose brain cells will merge with yours for the moment that they read your personal opinion of matters of true science! What importance!

We believe that the program we've constructed is very special and will provide, for the motivated student, an atmosphere almost completely content free in which his or her ideas can flow in vacuity. So, take the moment to indicate your name, address, age, and hat size by filling out the rear of this post and mailing it to:

FAMOUS FLAMER'S SCHOOL
c/o Locker number 6E
Grand Central Station North
New York, NY.

Act now or forever hold your peace.

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